

Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Board

Approved Minutes for October 3, 2002

Voted on and Approved Unanimously on November 7, 2002

Attendees:

Board Members:

Chairman Ralph Hambrick, Vice Chairman Sue Cecil, Catherine Harold, C. Lynn Newcomb, John Pearsall, Greg Velzy, Walter Witschey and Jonathan Young.

Others:

Lyle Browning (Archaeological Society of Virginia), Bill Cranor (Save Oregon Hill Organization/Park Committee), Catherine Dahl (VCU), Tom Huff (VCU), Napi Ippolito (Greater Richmond Environmental Action Trust), Buzz Kraft (Richmond Raft Company and Adventure Challenge), Lyn Lanier (Friends of James River Park), Alisia Penn (Department of Public Utilities), Charles Pool (Oregon Hill), Lilly Richards (Department of Historic Resources), Jamie Stillman (VCU), Ralph White (Parks and Recreation), Cheryl Yancey (VCU) and R. B. Young.

Chairman Hambrick called the meeting to order and announced his intent to postpone consideration of the minutes until after a presentation.

Tom Huff, Vice Provost for Life Sciences at Virginia Commonwealth University, delivered a presentation, including video, regarding the Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences. The focus of Huff's presentation concerned a significant piece of riverfront property in the County of Charles City donated to VCU by Mrs. Ingrid Rice. Huff discussed VCU's objectives and goals for the program and property. Huff explained that a component of the plan is to develop a small piece of the property in three phases totaling 7.5 million dollars. This development would in part rely on existing infrastructure that is a relic of a previous YMCA camp. Huff communicated VCU's desire to utilize the property for the purpose of ecological study.

Sue Cecil asked Huff if VCU is considering alternative energy sources and Huff responded in the affirmative. Huff continued by espousing the University's intent to create an ecological paradigm for other schools.

The Board reviewed the September 12 minutes and Greg Velzy requested that the minutes include a question he had asked of DPU regarding the safety of the pipeline. The Board voted unanimously in support of the minutes.

Jonathan Young informed the Board of its statutory obligation to post the minutes online and his efforts to accomplish such. John Pearsall requested that the Board make every effort to disseminate the minutes to institutions including City Council, the

planning commission, Richmond Renaissance and others in an attempt to better publicize the Board's actions. In addition, Pearsall implored the Board to make a concerted effort to introduce more interaction between Richmond's numerous "parochial" institutions associated with the James River. Catherine Harold inquired of Hambrick the costs associated with the dissemination of documents. Specifically, Harold requested information regarding whether Hambrick bore these costs. Hambrick informed the Board that the City pays for the distribution. Walter Witschey recommended that the Board rely on the Internet to publicize its actions. Jonathan Young suggested the Board should pursue links of related interests with other institutions specifically referring to Richmond Renaissance. Hambrick summarized the discussion by indicating that the Board should expand its mailing list and should utilize electronic means to do so.

Hambrick inquired of the Board if it was interested in endorsing the Huguenot water transmission plan. Hambrick suggested that the project was inevitable. R. B. Young, immediate past chair of the Board, discussed historic designation of the section of the canal that would be involved. Lilly Richard, Department of Historic Resources, implied that more study might be needed regarding the historical implications of such a project in the area. Catherine Harold asked the Board about the public comment period and if the project was subject to the Army Corps of Engineers review. The Board elected not to vote on the proposal.

Hambrick initiated a discussion of the proposed Brown's Island development and suggested that the board should engage in a discussion with other interested parties, including the developer, in regards to the accessibility of the public to the river via vistas. Pearsall espoused his belief that office and apartment tenants will not be interested in introducing a lot of transient traffic. Witschey asked if at the previous meeting the Board received a sufficient answer from John Woodward concerning parking on the island. Young responded with a yes indicating that Woodward had conveyed the concept of an ebb and flow of traffic as a result of the mixed-use intent of the development. Ralph White suggested that there has not been enough discussion regarding the building roofs and the potential associated with such. Young suggested that it was in the economic interest of the developer to include as many river vistas as feasible. Cecil argued that fisherman should have access to the area though Velzy indicated that there is currently very little access for fisherman.

Representative of Oregon Hill delivered a presentation and requested that the Board consider endorsing a resolution regarding the city's acquisition of a piece of property, described by the representative as the "missing link", from Ethyl for the purpose of creating a continuum of a park leading from the river to Monroe Park. Hambrick indicated that a continuum does not currently exist and Bill Kranor explained the Parsons House was state property not subject to city condemnation. Young asked Kranor about the fair market value of the property, relationship to the proposed Ethyl apartment complex and Ethyl's intent for the property. Kranor indicated that the property is worth approximately 100,000 dollars, is adjacent to the development and that Ethyl initially intended on locating commercial structures on the property though parking may be a consideration. Young voiced his concern that the Board's action could be

interpreted as an endorsement of acquisition via eminent domain. The board discussed the endorsement of the acquisition and subsequent an amendment to the resolution, the board voted unanimously to *support the concept of a walkway from Monroe Park along Belvidere and the Oregon Hill Linear Park to the James River and the pedestrian bridge to Belle Isle. The Board encourages interested parties, including the City, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Oregon Hill Association to support the completion of this walkway and therefore we support the adoption of City Paper No. 2002-271.*

Lyle Browning briefed the Board on the necessity of moving the canal artifacts located alongside the Haxall canal. Cecil asked Browning if Maymont was interested in the artifacts though Browning indicated Maymont was not. Pearsall asked Witschey if the Science Museum was interested in the artifacts and Witschey replied that the museum unfortunately does not have the capacity for them. Pearsall suggested that Mark Merhige and Andy Thornton should be briefed on this necessity and involved in the decision making process. Further, Pearsall recommended that the Board adopt a resolution encouraging Jim McCarthy, CEO of Richmond Redevelopment, Corp., to resolve the problem. Witschey contributed to this discussion by framing a resolution encouraging McCarthy to do so and was agreed upon unanimously by the Board. Velzy suggested that the Port of Richmond may have enough capacity for the artifacts and encouraged Browning to pursue this option. Later in the meeting, Browning informed the Board that pursuant to Velzy's advice, Browning had contacted the Port of Richmond and the Port communicated its willingness to store the artifacts and would do so in kind. In addition, Browning informed the Board that transportation costs could exceed 6,000 to 7,000 dollars.

Catherine Harold delivered a presentation regarding Surface Water Management and the State Water Control Board's discussion of implementing such. Harold communicated her concerns regarding the approach that is apparently the most favorable to the Department of Environmental Quality and the State Water Control Board. Harold expressed a concern that the trigger levels are too low and that the triggers would be a rolling trigger subject to spikes subsequent a heavy rainstorm. Harold informed the board of a previous study conducted by an independent contractor with more liberal triggers. R. B. Young informed the Board that the DEQ approach is too conservative. Hambrick requested that Harold develop a recommendation for the Board and Cecil requested the same of Harold. Harold voiced her willingness to do so.

Cecil inquired of whitewater takeout and Hambrick informed the Board that Council continued the relevant paper.

The Board adjourned at 2:30.